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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND
RELATED AGENCIES

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

November 2, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

Please accept my gratitude for your continuing efforts in promoting human rights and government transparency. Since the beginning of your administration, there have been several productive steps to honor your promise of operating at an unprecedented level of openness, including the establishment of the National Declassification Center and the U.S.'s prominent role in the Open Government Partnership (OGP). As a member of the House Appropriations Committee on Defense, I believe we cannot overlook the role our older national security archives can play in promoting truth and justice for the victims of human rights abuses. In light of your upcoming meeting with President Cristina Kirchner of Argentina, you now have the opportunity to prove our dedication to human rights and build upon your transparency efforts while strengthening the diplomatic relationship with the government of Argentina.

Many Latin American nations are still struggling to come to terms with the legacy of human rights abuses perpetrated by military regimes in the 1970's and 80's. I have sought to shed light on these abuses for many years. A CIA-issued report, required by an amendment I offered to the Fiscal Year 2000 Intelligence Authorization Act, helped uncover U.S. knowledge of events in Chile under the brutal regime of Augusto Pinochet. Given the U.S. intelligence community's relationship with its Latin American counterparts, there is also relevant information in our classified national security archives concerning cases in Argentina. Even a limited, measured release can make a significant contribution to bring closure to the families and children of the disappeared.

To further demonstrate our nation's commitment to human rights, I urge the review and release of U.S. intelligence documents held by the Pentagon, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency related to Argentina's security forces and detention centers, beginning in 1976, responsible for human rights abuses, specifically concerning the children of the disappeared. This information can provide reconciliation and closure for millions of Argentines who are still struggling with the legacy of oppression by the military regime.

From 1976 to the mid-1980's, hundreds of children were born into captivity and distributed to members of the Argentine security forces. While their mothers are believed to have been killed, the identities of some of these children, who would be in their 20's and early 30's today, have

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been discovered. Yet tragically the identities and whereabouts of the majority of those born in captivity remain unknown.

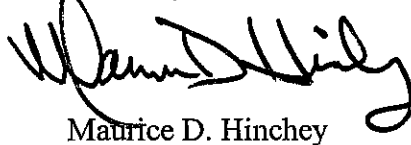
A discretionary release of State Department records on Argentina was authorized by President Clinton and implemented by President Bush. While this release has been able to provide some insight, it lacks the detailed documents from U.S. intelligence and national security agencies that could shed light on the unidentified children. The State Department has set a precedent with its release, and intelligence agencies are more than capable of selectively reviewing relevant records, as demonstrated by the CIA's report on Chile.

These documents are well over 25 years old, making them eligible for declassification review pursuant to Executive Order 13526. Your Executive Order established an unambiguous path for declassification, and I believe these documents are strong candidates for mandatory declassification by executive authority. The substantial backlog at the National Archives and Records Administration and history of unwillingness to declassify by U.S. intelligence agencies has led me to believe that systematic declassification is not a suitable solution.

Thousands of families have waited more than 30 years to learn the fates of their loved ones, and we have an opportunity to make a contribution to truth and justice by helping to bring this troubling chapter in Argentina's history to a close. I ask that you follow through on your administration's commitment to openness by reviewing these files for declassification. The release of these documents would once again demonstrate our nation's dedication to human rights and open government and help lift the veil of secrecy that still hangs over this horrific part of Argentina's history.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maurice D. Hinchey", written in a cursive style.

Maurice D. Hinchey